466 workers, invitations to talk to visitors about 461 their accomplishments, and, occasionally, even tours of foreign countries for propaganda purposes.

V. WAGES AND PURCHASING POWER

•465 In order to insure a stable income for the people at a time of wide fluctuation in commodity prices, the Chinese Communists introduced a system whereby workers were paid in wage-units. One wage unit was worth the sum of the retail prices of the following daily necessities,[17] over which the government had control:

Food grain	0.80 catty*/
White cotton cloth	0.20 ch'ih#/
Edible oil	0.05 catty
Salt	0.02 catty
Coal	2.00 catties

*/ One catty = 1.1 lb.
#/ One ch'ih = 1.09 ft.

Southwest China was the last region to adopt the wage-unit system. In October 1952, the money value of the wage-unit in the Southwest region was quoted at 2,158 yuan (old currecy), the lowest quotation in the country. Before the wage-unit system was adopted in this region, workers were paid in "commodity-equivalent" units,[18] which

17. Yangtze Daily, March 11, 1951, p. 2.
18. Commodity-equivalent units were also based on the prices of essential commodities.

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had been used previously in Communist China to compute and stabilize savings deposits. One "commodity-equivalent" unit was quoted in October 1951 at 5,492 yuan (old currency).[19] The average miner in the T'ien-fu coal mine in Chungking was reported to be earning 120 "commodity-equivalent" units per month in mid-1950, which amounted to 659,000 yuan (about US$22),[20] while the average monthly pay for the construction worker was said to be 89 "commodity-equivalent" units (about US 19.50). The lowest pay was received by the apprentices who averaged 4.5 "commodity-equivalent" units per month[21] (about US$1.00).

At the end of 1951, state-operated enterprises in the Southwest Region began to pay their workers in wage-units instead of "commodity-equivalent" units. The average gross earnings of a highly skilled worker in a Chungking steel factory was reported to be 300 wage units a month, amounting to 647,400 yuan (about US $25.90). An unskilled worker earned about 60 wage-units per month (about US $5.20).[22]

The Chinese Communists claim that the wages of Chinese workers have been rising as production increased, but the Communists' own figures do not support the claim. According to

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19. New China Daily, Oct.4,1951.p.6.

20. There are no direct quotations on the exchange rate of the yuan in terms of the U.S. dollar at this period. The figure is worked out from Hong Kong money to be about 25,000 yuan for one U.S. dollar.

21. Chinese Worker Monthly, Sept.1950, p.70.

22. New China Daily, Sept. 25, 1952, p.2; and Sept. 30, 1952, p. 1.

465 Communists statistics,[23] the average annual increase from 1951 to 1953 in the total value of industrial products of the Southwest Region was about 32 per cent. The 1953 average wage of workers in publicly owned enterprises in the region exceeded the 1952 average by only 13 per cent.

465 511 The Chinese Communists boast that the increase of wages in China does not merely keep pace with the rise of living coats as is supposed to happen in a capitalist society, but represents a real elevation of the workers' living standard. In the Southwest Region, people's purchasing power[24] in 1952 was said to be 30 per cent higher than in 1950. The New China News Agency reported that three times the amount of cotton textiles were being supplied to the people of Szechwan Province in 1954, compared with 1951.[25] In Chungking, the consumption of meat in Nov. 1952 was reported to be 160 per cent higher than that in the pre-Communist period.[26]

An examination of the budget of a skilled worker in a Chungking steel factory, reported by the New China Daily on September 25, 1952, offers evidence for doubting the validity of the Communist

23. People's China, Peking, Sept. 1, 1954, p. 18.
24. Ching-chi Tao-pao [Economic Bulletin] Feb. 24, 1953, p. 10.
25. NCNA, Chengtu, Sept. 9, 1954.
26. Economic Bulletin, Sept. 8, 1953, p. 1.

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465 claims:
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Income (Wages and bonuses)	Yuan
	600,000

Expenditure	Yuan
Rice	90,000
Fuel (coal and wood)	68,000
Edible oil	10,800
Fat	8,000
Salt	510
Supplementary food	80,000
Rent	25,890
Total	283,200

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651 The expenditures in the above budget are all for food and rent, which consumes about 47 per cent of the average worker's earnings. Besides clothing and other miscellaneous expenses, the remaining 53 per cent of his gross income is subject to various deductions in the form of union fees, "voluntary" contributions, and purchases of government bonds. When the Communist government issued the 1950 Victory Bond series, the Southwest Region was allocated 700,000 points; people [27] were urged to buy as many points as they could afford. The purchase of even one point was a big deduction from the workers' small income. After the Chinese Communists entered

27. One Victory Bond point was equal to the total value of six catties of rice, one catty of flour, four ch'ih of cotton cloth, sixteen catties of coal. One unit was quoted at 14,005 yuan (old currency) at the beginning of 1950.

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the Korean war, the Chinese workers were urged to make "voluntary" contributions to finance the war. Within three months of 1951, workers in the city of Chungking contributed 13,200,000,000 yuan (old currency).[28]

The Communists have reported an increase in bank savings throughout the whole country. By early May 1954, total saving deposits in cities nationwide were stated to be ten times larger in May 1954 than at the end of 1950. By the end of 1953, savings deposits in the Southwest Region had increased by 7.5 times as compared with 1950. But the in creased savings do not necessarily indicate surplus spending power in the hands of the people. Beginning in 1952, the Chinese Communists forced each worker to put 25 to 30 per cent of his income in the People's Bank as compulsory savings to prevent possible inflation and to accumulate capital for national construction.[29] After deducting the "voluntary" contributions and compulsory savings, there is not like to be money for the workers to spend for other than daily living needs.

VI. LABOR WELFARE

A. Insurance and Health

Under the Labor Insurance Law promulgated by the Communist government in March 1951, 5,380,000 workers throughout China received insurance coverage for death, old age, illness and disability. In the Southwest China Region, there were 163,824 workers, other than railway

28. New China Daily, Oct. 25,1951,p.2.
29. Tsu-kuo Chou-k'an[China Weekly], Hong Kong, Jan.4, 1954, p. 41.

499 sphere of movement was restricted to within
466 2 li (about 545 yards) on each side of the construction line.

499 The recruits were paid according to piece
465 rates, calculated on the basis of the work-day unit. One work-day unit is what an average worker could accomplish in one day. In the case of the Chengtu-Chungking Railway construction, one work-day unit is 2.5 cubic meters (about 81.75 cubic feet) of earthwork. For this amount of work, one worker received seven and one-half catties (about 8.25 lbs.) of rice.[5] In Southwest China, one catty of medium-grade rice was sold for 740 yuan (old currency); one U.S. dollar was worth about 20,000 yuan at the time. Therefore, 7.5 catties of rice would be worth about 27 cents in the United States. With this amount of money per day, the worker had to provide for his food, clothing, and other necessities, not to mention the support of his family.

499 The recruits were required to bring their own tools such as pickaxes and bamboo poles, for railway construction in China depended upon physical labor rather than upon mechanical equipment. Machinery for the laying of tracks was not introduced until the spring of 1954 in building the Pao-chi-Chengtu Line. The workers

5. The World Today, Hong Kong, Oct. 15, 1952, p. 2.

796 on these cholera prayer meetings to the cause of the War against the national enemy. The wealthiest family of the locality, after spending more than one million dollars on a funeral in West Town, gave fifty thousand dollars from their condolers' presents to the national cause and earned for themselves much publicity in the papers.

An analysis of the items of the expenditures shows that from about one-sixth to one-fourth of the total is paid to the priests and their musical and other assistants; from about one-half to two-thirds is expended on food for human beings as well as for the gods and spirits; and the rest is expended on paper money, incense, candles, fire crackers, paper works (image and dragon boats, etc.) and miscellaneous expenses.

796 The ordinary priest's wage for a working day is as follows:

793 Wage - $50.00; Tobacco - $5.00; rice (one sheng) - worth about $18.00; total - $73.00 EC.

465 For the chief priest in a prayer meeting the working day wage may be considerably more. In addition to the above he gets a larger share of the rice offered by those who rent their newly deceased family members "uplifted" in the spirit world on the second night of the prayer meeting. In the larger meetings such a source of income is considerable. In the prayer meeting which took place in Area E, the author counted nineteen tables ritually "uplifted" on the second night, which meant that the priests would receive nineteen sheng of rice (or about three hundred and eighty dollars) for the meeting alone.

The priest's wage is very impressive when we compare it with the expenditures of the sample families mentioned above and with the wages of other workers in the community. The author only studied the work of the priests in the community to a very limited extent, so cannot say how many days the average priest works during a month. But when we consider the number of ritual occasions stated in Chapter II of this paper, the total number of the population, and the fact that there are not more than a hundred priests in the community(8) (the community refers to the town and its surrounding villages), we shall have a fair idea on the working opportunities of each priest. For them, if we assume that each priest works for ten days a month, then his monthly income will at least amount to somewhere around five thousand national dollars.(9) The daily wage of a laborer on a farm around West Town, on the other hand, during rice-planting which occurred in the same month as the prayer meetings, was seven dollars to seven dollars and fifty cents a day plus board. That means that the laborer gets about 240 dollars plus food a month during the "busy period" on farms while the priest gets about twenty times that sum or more plus ten days of food a month. Food for a month per person, according to the best standards in West Town, was not more than three or four hundred national dollars during the corresponding period. The distance between the income of the priest and

(8) This figure may not be exact. It was obtained from the estimates of a few informants. The author's attempts at studying the census records of the sub-district government (which are not exact by any means) met with some unsurmounted obstacles at the time.

(9) For ordinary prayers of blessing and in funerals the wage may be less than that in these cholera prayer meetings.

that of the laborers and these sample families studied is large. His monthly income is even more than double the comparatively high income of the butchers. Probably this fact is responsible for making a larger percentage of them opium addicts than they would have been had their economic position been less favorable. The priests of West Town are undoubtedly a privileged class of people. 796 793 465

2. The Meaning of the Prayer Meetings

(a) The Priest's Explanations. - The author has spoken to three officiating priests of these prayer meetings, one of them the most famous priest in the locality, about the meaning of these prayers. Their explanation is the following: The epidemic[1] is caused by evil Wen spirits, spread forth by the Wen God to punish the people for their sinful deeds. The Wen God acts by order of the superior deities. In order to avert the disaster it is necessary to invoke the mercy of superior deities who will require the Wen God to retract the Wen spirits which he let loose earlier on. It is necessary to invoke as many superior deities as possible. The chief deities, worshipped in the center of the main altars, are the San Ch'ing, who are three deities in one, or Lao Tzu, the founder of Taoist religion.(10) More deities are invoked each day of the prayer meeting, so that a one-day prayer meeting can invoke only a much smaller number of deities than a two-day prayer meeting. The latter again is less effective than a three-day prayer meeting. Usually three days and four nights are an adequate duration, but for real perfection seven or eight more days will be desirable. 796 753

In order to move the deities it is necessary to show first of all that the people of the locality are moral and then that their hearts are absolutely earnest and that their request is extremely pressing. For this reason posters exhorting the people to take care of their moral qualities rather than anything else are essential. For the same reason in each prayer meeting one or more representatives must be chosen to perform a continuous worshipping duty (namely to kneel on the altar with an incense burner in hand during the entire length of the prayer meeting). For the same reason, too, it is necessary for each street as well as each village to have a separate prayer meeting. The petition papers burnt during the prayers are like petitions to our worldly officials. The various amulets and incantations used and performed respectively are special keys which the mortal does not comprehend but to which the deities will readily respond. The loud music by bugles, drum, cymbals, flute, bells, etc., as well as the singing and reading by the priests, are for the deities to hear. The louder the music and voice, the higher will they reach and consequently the easier and more quickly will the deities notice the distress of the area and the more swifty take actions for its relief.

Only a properly "qualified" priest can perform the duty of the prayer, and certain special inborn priests enjoy more such power than others who are less fortunate.

It is not necessary for every prayer meeting to include the "Wen-God-retracting-evil-Wen-spirits" ritual; one or two will be enough to fulfil the purpose. But more ritual actions are always a safer course to take than less ritual actions. The ritual of spreading rice porridge along the streets

(10) It will be interesting to note that this "three deities in one" tale is entirely based upon a traditional novel on deities called Fong Shen Pang (literally, List of Ordained Gods).

[1] [of cholera, in "West Town" -- Analyst]